

John B. Read's Row
(Gilliam Row Houses)
102-104 West Old Street
Petersburg
Virginia

HABS No. VA-643

HABS

VA

29-PET

5.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. VA-643

JOHN B. READ'S ROW
(Gilliam Row Houses)

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Location: 102-104 West Old Street, Petersburg, Virginia

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Frederick A. Tussing, 930 East Westover Avenue, Colonial Heights, Virginia.

Present Occupant: Floyd Mills, first floor 102, other floors vacant. 104 is completely vacant.

Present Use: Sign company in 102, originally shops on first floor with living quarters above.

Brief Statement of Significance: These fine Federal row houses were built for John B. Read c. 1815-1818. Originally there were stores on the first floor and living quarters above. Particularly noteworthy on the exterior are the arched door openings on the first floor front, and the beaded keystones of the door and window lintels. On the interior in the 104 building there is an original doorway with fluted pilasters, lintel, and fan light.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1815-1818. This building must have been built between July 16, 1815 when a fire destroyed this area of the city (James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, IV, Petersburg's Story (Petersburg: Titmus Optical Company, 1960), p. 57.), and March 4, 1818, when an inventory was made of John B. Read's personal property (Will Book 2, p. 150).
2. Architect, etc.: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Complete chain of title for the building follows. Deed and Will Books are in the Clerk's Office of Hustings Court at Petersburg.

The following chain of title applies to 104 W. Old St. only.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
5/15/1810 Book 3 page 503	Gary, Thomas E. Rebecca H.	Read, John B. (property)
7/16/1811 Book 4 page 68	"	"
12/1817 Will Book 2 page 148	Read, John B.	Branch, Thomas Sarah P.
10/8/1831 Book 8 page 383	Branch, Thomas Sarah P.	Whitmore, Hebert
6/29/1866 Book 29 page 215	Donnan, Alexander, comm.	Burgess, John
6/25/1874 Book 36 page 94	Syon, David A., comm.	Burgess, Rush
8/24/1874 Book 37 page 437	Burgess, Rush Mary E.	Gerecke, August
12/13/1887 Book 49 page 361	Gerecke, August	Gilliam, Willis

The following chain of title applies to 102 W. Old St.
only.

2/12/1812 Book 4 page 110	Gary, Thomas E. Rebecca H.	Read, John B.
12/1817 Will Book 2 page 148	Read, John B.	Branch, Thomas Sarah P.
6/2/1831 Book 8 page 372	Branch, Thomas Sarah P.	Heath, Hartwell P. Mason Joseph

6/12/1835 Book 9 page 249	Heath, Hartwell P. Elizabeth C.	Mason, Joseph
12/26/1882 Book 43 page 470	Mann, John, comm. Mason heirs	Garnes, Thomas
9/4/1900 Book 63 page 321	Garnes, Thomas	Gilliam Willis

The following chain of title applies to 102 & 104 W. Old St.

3/24/1920 Will Book 11 page 560	Gilliam, Willis	Johnson, Willie Anna
7/10/1924 Book 107 page 9	Johnson, William Anna	Appomattox Iron Works and Supply Company, Inc.
5/18/1946 Book 156 page 179	Appomattox Iron Works and Supply Company, Inc.	Allen, Harvey L.
3/24/1947 Book 160 page 454	Allen, Harvey L. Meriam E.	Tussing, Sophia B. Frederick A.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Unknown

5. Alterations and additions: Unknown

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

This building was once considered a fine piece of property and was owned by several mayors of the Town of Petersburg including Thomas Branch (1842-1843) and Rush Burgess (1867-1868).

Prepared by Randall J. Biallas
University of Illinois, Urbana
August 1968

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Information:

1. Architectural character: This is a brick row structure, built in 1815-1818, unusual on the exterior for its arched doorways in front and on the interior for its fan light doorway (second floor) with moulded jamb.
2. Condition of fabric: Exterior, fair. Interior, poor. The building has been remodeled several times and is presently occupied only on the first floor, 102. Floors are sagging and many walls are no longer squared.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions and shape: The building has three rectangular parts, butted back to back. The front main portion is approximately 43' x 44', three-and-a-half stories plus an unfinished basement. The back portion of the main building is approximately 24' x 30', two stories plus a basement. Early addition at the rear is approximately 58' x 16', is one story high and has no basement. The main front portion of the building is divided into two units, each of the same overall dimensions. There are six window bays across the front upper stories, three in each unit.
2. Foundations: There are brick party walls and timber pilings supporting floor beams above.
3. Wall construction: Reddish brown brick, natural finish.
4. Chimneys: There are six brick chimneys - four in the three-and-a-half story portion and two in the two-and-a-half story portion. Those in the main part are on the east and west exterior wall, two on each side. The two on the west side are about three feet higher than those on the east for those on the east appear to have broken off at some previous time and have been rebuilt.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are three exterior doors on the north (front) facade - a small single door near the middle which leads to the upper floor and

double doors on each side leading to the first floor store level. These double doorways constitute two of the striking aspects of the building. Above each doorway is a brick arch with a cast stone keystone. The head of each doorway is a moulded wood cornice shape and between the head and arch is a transom light. The doors themselves do not appear to be original. A large doorway on the alley side (east) has been blocked in. This was probably a service entrance at one time. Other doors do not appear to be original.

- b. Windows and shutters: The three windows on the first floor front are all large, picture window type with a single glass pane in each. All are the product of remodeling but there were, no doubt, windows in the same locations. The second and third story windows are similar. They are all double hung and each has a brick lintel with ornate cast stone keystone. The difference is that the second story windows have eighteen lights, nine in each sash, and the third story (the attic also, on the side) has fifteen lights with only six in the bottom sash. There are still several shutter latches in place, but no shutters.
6. Porches and areaways: No porches, no areaways as such, but there is an access to each basement through openings in the sidewalk in front. These are covered over with a metal grate.
7. Structural system: Brick party walls with joists spanning between. Wood pilings in basement support heavy first floor beam at center span. (observation made in 102, 104 assumed to be the same - inaccessible). Attic roof framing: A-frame trusses, join into front and rear walls. The two-and-a-half story roof portion is framed similarly but the gable is turned at right angle to the three-and-a-half story part.
8. Roof shape and covering: Gabled roof and three-and-a-half and two-and-a-half story portions. The addition has a lean-to roof which is slightly sloping. The covering on the front part was formerly slate and is now a synthetic covering. The two-and-a-half story portion has a tin covering, as does the addition, ribs varying from 18" to 24" o. c.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Unfinished area. The basement in 102 and 104 is separated by a party wall. The 104 part is inaccessible. The access is through a trapdoor at sidewalk level. No basement under the addition.
- b. First floor: Primarily large open areas for use as shops, divided into two parts with connecting door between party walls.
- c. Second and third floors: Similar, large rooms with access off the central hallway. In the three-and-a-half story part each of the four main rooms (on each floor) has a fireplace. In former times the rooms above the shops probably served as living quarters for the shopkeepers.
- d. Attic: The attic consists, in each case, of one small room with two exterior windows along one wall.

2. Stairways: Several staircases are in the building, mostly in the central hall. The main stairway to the second floor is between the two shops and gives a private outside entrance to the upper floors. A stairway also leads from the second floor out to a rear exit. At least two staircases have been removed or closed off, both to the shops below from the second floor. There is no significant trim or detailing on any of them.

3. Flooring: Basement floor, dirt; the original wood plank floor on the other floors has in most cases been covered with newer wood floor. All floors are wood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The basement walls are brick; the original walls of the first floor have been covered with wallboard. The ceiling (104) is suspended wallboard. The ceiling (102) has wood paneling. The other walls have primarily plaster finish. 104 also has wood wainscot trim around walls. The second floor has walls and ceilings both primarily

plaster. The second floor front room (104) has a dropped wood paneled ceiling. Some wainscoting in various rooms. There is evidence that there was probably wainscoting in nearly every room originally. The third floor and the attic have also plastered walls and ceilings. In the attic the plaster is in particularly poor condition (both in 102 and in 104) and has spawled badly.

5. Doorways and doors: The only interior doorway of note is the connecting double doorway between the large rooms (104) on the second floor. It is, indeed, a very handsome doorway. Both doors are paneled with four panels each door, two different sizes. The door frame and arch above, however, are the most significant features. On each side there is a moulded wood pilaster, fluted, with decorative base and capital. Across the head is an ornate moulding with fine dentil work and above the door is a fan light arch also ornately detailed with a moulded wood keystone of a design similar to those on the exterior.
6. Lighting: Modern
7. Heating: The oil stoves vented through fireplace flues, are no longer in use.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. The building is oriented north on West Old Street in an area of low rent housing and light manufacturing and commercial. An alley runs along the east side and to the west and east both are multistory buildings.
2. Outbuildings: None exist. However, according to the present owner, a carriage house did stand at the southeast rear corner of the building, beside the addition. It was a brick construction.
3. Landscaping: There is a sidewalk in the front. The building is set back approximately 12' from the street. No planting. There are medium height trees in the rear.

Prepared by John M. McRae
Project Supervisor
HABS
August 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation made during the 1968 Petersburg Summer Project, undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with The Historic Petersburg Foundation, Inc., with financial assistance from The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. During the summer, records were made of twenty-two buildings in the city.

The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was John M. McRae of the University of Florida. The recording team was composed of Randall J. Biallas, historian (University of Illinois, Urbana), and student assistant architects Michael Hamilton (University of Arizona), Thomas J. Sanford (Washington State University), and Edwin S. Smith, Jr. (Rhode Island School of Design). Photographs were made by George Eisenman.